



Illinois Department of Transportation

Office of Business & Workforce Diversity
2300 South Dirksen Parkway / Springfield, Illinois 62764

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

What is the DBE Program?

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) administers a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program that is federally-mandated by the United States Department of Transportation (US DOT). The DBE program is intended to remedy past and current discrimination against DBEs, ensure a "level playing field" and foster equal opportunity in US DOT-assisted contracts, improve the flexibility and efficiency of the DBE program, and reduce burdens on small businesses.

The DBE program administered by IDOT provides minorities, women and other eligible small businesses an opportunity to participate in highway, airport and transit contracts that are federal and state-funded. The presumptive groups that are eligible for the DBE program are:

- Black Americans,
- Hispanic Americans,
- Native Americans,
- Asian-Pacific Americans,
- Subcontinent Asian Americans,
- Women
- Any additional groups whose members are designated as socially and economically disadvantaged by the Small Business Administration (SBA), at such time as the SBA designation becomes effective.

Also considered eligible is any individual who IDOT finds to be socially and economically disadvantaged on a case-by-case basis.

Should I apply for DBE certification?

DBE goals are put on projects, and prime contractors must utilize DBE firms to meet those goals. If your firm is interested in state government work, performs heavy highway/airport-related construction, professional engineering consulting, trucking, manufacturing/fabricating and construction material supply services, and meets the following eligibility criteria, then you should apply for IDOT DBE certification. You do not have to be DBE-certified to perform work on IDOT contracts, but your chances at procuring work increase if you are certified.

Am I eligible?

A firm (including its affiliates) must meet the requirements of 49 CFR part 26, Subpart D, concerning group membership or individual disadvantage, business size, ownership and control.

A firm must be at least 51 percent owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who possess the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of the firm and to make day-to-day, as well as long-term, decisions on matters of management, policy and operations.

Individual/business size restrictions:

- For general construction firms, the size cap is \$17.42M (average annual gross receipts over the firm's previous three fiscal years).
- For engineering consultant firms, the size cap is \$4M (average annual gross receipts over the firm's preceding three fiscal years).
- The personal net worth (PNW) restriction for an individual whose ownership and control is relied upon for DBE certification is \$750,000. The individual's PNW does not include the business applying for DBE certification or the individual's equity in his or her primary place of residence.

Do I have to perform certain kinds of work?

Yes, IDOT contracts involve only heavy highway/airport-related construction, professional engineering consulting, trucking, manufacturing/fabricating and construction material supply services.

What if I am interested in state agency work other than with IDOT?

If your firm is interested in work that is available through the **City of Chicago** (roadway and airport construction, airport concession-related services and professional consulting services), **Chicago Transit Authority** (bus, rail, door-to-door paratransit service), **Metra** (rail) or **PACE** (bus), their contact information is provided below:

- City of Chicago, 312/742-0766, www.cityofchicago.com
- CTA, 312/664-7200, ext. 3515, www.transitchicago.com
- Metra, 312/322-6323, www.metrarail.com
- PACE, 847/228-2439, www.pacebus.com

What if I do not perform work in these areas?

If you perform in nonconstruction-related services, you should contact the Illinois Department of Central Management Services' (CMS) Business Enterprise Program.

The Business Enterprise Program is designed to encourage state agencies to purchase needed goods and services from businesses owned and controlled by members of minority groups, females and/or persons with disabilities. Through this program, only certified small businesses are eligible to bid on certain procurements. Visit the CMS web site at www.state.il.us/cms for more information.

How do I apply for IDOT DBE certification?

You must complete and submit an Illinois Unified Certification Program *"Uniform Certification Application,"* plus all required/requested information. The application is available on IDOT's web site (www.dot.state.il.us/dobuisns.html) or by contacting IDOT's Office of Business and Workforce Diversity's Bureau of Small Business Enterprises at 217/782-5490.

Is there a cost to become certified?

No.

If I need help filling out the application and other paperwork, who can I contact?

IDOT has supportive services consultants who can assist you. Supportive services assistance is free to firms who are seeking IDOT DBE certification or are already certified by IDOT. Contact IDOT's Office of Business and Workforce Diversity's Bureau of Small Business Enterprises at 217/782-5490 and they will arrange for you to receive assistance.

How long does it take to become certified?

The certification process may take a minimum of 90 days after receipt of the completed application. The effort you make to submit a complete application with all requested documentation will help decrease processing time.

Who can I call if I have questions regarding the processing of my application?

Your application is assigned to a certification analyst following receipt of the application by the Bureau of Small Business Enterprises, and he/she can answer your questions. Or, if you used supportive services assistance to apply for certification, the consultant can assist you.

How long does the certification period last?

Five years. Each year, however, you will be required to submit, on the anniversary date of your certification, a "No Change Affidavit" meeting the requirements of 49 CFR 26.83(j).

Once I am certified, is my firm name listed in a directory?

Yes, IDOT participates in the Illinois Unified Certification Program (IL UCP) with the City of Chicago, CTA, Metra and PACE, and the IL UCP maintains a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Directory (directory).

Once certified, your firm's name, address, work categories and work location preferences will appear in the directory. This directory is used by IDOT's prime contractors, as well as other agencies, to provide a reference source of DBE firms to assist bidders/proposers in meeting DBE contract goals.

The directory is available on IDOT's web site (www.dot.state.il.us/dobuisns.html) or by contacting IDOT's Office of Business and Workforce Diversity's Bureau of Small Business Enterprises at 217/782-5490.

Who can I call regarding IDOT's DBE program?

The Bureau of Small Business Enterprises' phone numbers are:

- Bureau Chief - 217/785-5947
- Certification Section - 217/782-5490
- Compliance Section - 217/785-4611
- Supportive Services Section - 217/785-8372

I have seen programs with the designations of DBE, MBE, FBE, WBE, PBE - how are they different from one another?

DBE, MBE, FBE, WBE and PBE are acronyms for various state/county/local agency programs that provide contractual opportunities for disadvantaged, minority, female and woman-owned business enterprises.

- Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) (*includes minority and woman-owned businesses*)
- Minority Business Enterprises (MBE)
- Female Business Enterprises (FBE)
- Woman-owned Business Enterprises (WBE)
- Persons with disabilities Business Enterprises (PBE)

In Illinois, the following programs are offered by the listed agencies:

DBE program

The Illinois Department of Transportation, City of Chicago, CTA, Metra and PACE have a federally-funded statewide program for DBEs. These agencies have established the Illinois Unified Certification Program (IL UCP), which is based on the concept of reciprocity among the agencies. "One stop shopping" is provided to DBE program applicants, such that an applicant need only apply once for statewide DBE certification that will be honored by all participating agencies in the IL UCP. Although the Cook County Highway Department does not have its own DBE program, it utilizes IL UCP-certified DBEs on its highway projects.

MBE/WBE program

The City of Chicago has a locally-funded program for MBEs and WBEs that covers the City of Chicago and six-collar county area.

MBE/FBE/PBE program

The Illinois Department of Central Management Services has a state-funded statewide Business Enterprise Program for MBEs, FBEs and PBEs.